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President's Notes

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President's Notes

ON THESE PAGES in the Summer 1991 edition of the Naval War College Review, I offered several thoughts addressing the important contributions of the Navy-Marine Corps team to the Desert Shield and Desert Storm operations subsequent to the August 1990 invasion of Kuwait by Iran. I concluded by noting that while the threat has changed recently, and instability rather than the Soviet Union appears to be our most immediate concern, there should be little doubt in anyone's mind that our country's present and future leaders will continue to rely on naval forces in times of international turmoil.

The faculty of the Naval War College (NWC) has been carefully culling through the after-action reports of the recent operations in Southwest Asia and talking to participants, trying to distill the lessons that can be applied to future conflict. In some ways, the Gulf crisis was a textbook test of the warfare doctrines that the United States and its allies had been practicing in recent years: air-land

Admiral Strasser holds a B.S. from the Naval Academy, two master's degrees from the Fletcher School, Tufts University and, from the same school, a Ph.D. in political science. He graduated from the command and staff course at the Naval War College in 1972. He commanded the USS *O'Callahan* (FF 1051), Destroyer Squadron 35, Cruiser-Destroyer Group Three, and Battle Group Foxtrot. His seven years in Washington included two years in the office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

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battle doctrine (with its emphasis on highly mobile armored thrusts supported by tactical aircraft), aerospace doctrine (which stresses joint air control and coordination), and a maritime strategy based on forward deployment and rapidly surging carrier and marine striking forces. The test of these concepts was carried out in a major theater of war involving more than 500,000 U.S. military personnel and some 260,000 allied forces from 32 independent nations.

Desert Shield and Desert Storm were also major evaluations of the international community's ability to work together to keep the peace. The United Nations, in a rare demonstration of resolve, was in the forefront, passing resolutions condemning the invasion, assigning blame for damage inflicted, authorizing the use of force, and coordinating post-conflict reparations and disarmament. The Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council likewise condemned the attack and mobilized forces to prevent further aggression. Further afield, European countries put together expeditionary forces (land, air, and naval) to send to the region. Other nations later contributed extensive financial aid and mine countermeasures forces to help clear the 1,200-1,400 mines planted by the Iraqis. In all, 10 countries committed air forces, 22 nations contributed personnel on the ground, and 23 sent naval units to assist the coalition in pushing Iraq out of Kuwait and returning stability to the area. The world witnessed an unparalleled example of international cooperation which provided invaluable lessons for future multinational military operations. Our best prognostic efforts indicate that international coalitions, often of an *ad hoc* nature, will play a major role in future conflicts.

A gathering of maritime leaders recently took place at the Naval War College that has great implications for future cooperation among international navies. The world did not witness this meeting—in fact it was conducted without any media coverage—but I believe the activity and discussions which took place made solid contributions to mutual understanding among participating nations, thereby enhancing the likelihood of successful future international maritime operations. The event was the eleventh Chief of Naval Operations-sponsored International Seapower Symposium (ISS).

Improving communication and working together towards mutually beneficial ends have been the principle motives for conducting these biennial symposia since the first was held in Newport in 1969. For three days in October of this year, 29 Chiefs of Naval Service, representatives of 24 of the world's naval war colleges, and a total of 108 delegates representing 57 nations met to discuss the unique opportunities and responsibilities they face together, today and tomorrow. We should all be encouraged to know that this level of participation was the strongest in the history of the Symposium—an indicator of the true winds of international cooperation that we sense are blowing in many regions of the world.

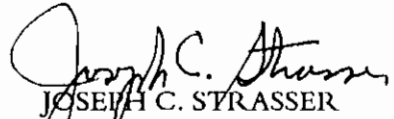
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The Symposium facilitated frank discussions among nations and, on a larger scale, made a major contribution to the framework for the safe and successful conduct of future operations. As in past years, this International Seapower Symposium was a unique gathering, away from the deckplates and bilateral and multinational maritime exercises. It saw maritime leaders, in the context of the historical events unfolding worldwide, attempt to define further the role of their navies in the defense establishments of their nations. Budget and force reduction concerns, advances in technology, the principle of maintaining freedom of the seas, ever-present arms proliferation, employment of naval forces in nontraditional roles, and other subjects were cast as common to all. The language spoken was a comfortable one, as explained by Admiral Kelso: "... we speak a common language which transcends both borders and political differences. And that is the language spoken by those who go to sea, and stand ready to sail in harm's way. The ties which bind sailors the world over have always been strong, and they are significant in times of peace as they are in war. . . . It is this spirit which allows sea-faring newcomers, like the representatives of the nations who have joined us for the first time, to feel comfortable in our midst, whether engaging in serious discussion or swapping sea stories. It is my hope that these traditionally strong and fraternal bonds will be renewed and strengthened during our time together in Newport."

The Naval War College is honored to host these biennial symposia, which have a great impact on both the present and future. Furthermore, we are proud of the many contributions we make daily to promoting understanding among navies of the world. The Naval War College has been privileged for 35 years to have as one of its resident colleges the Naval Command College (NCC), and since 1972, the Naval Staff College (NSC), both of which I spoke about on these pages in recent months. Almost eleven hundred naval officers from 72 nations have graduated from the NCC, and 767 officers from 82 nations are NSC graduates. Over the years, these graduates have had among their ranks many flag officers and chiefs of service. A total of 29 NCC and NSC graduates returned to their alma mater for the eleventh Seapower Symposium, among whom were chiefs of naval service from Australia, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Trinidad and Tobago. The camaraderie and trust developed while war college students certainly added to the frank and cordial discussions during the Symposium.

Considerable and appropriate attention is focused on the Naval War College programs that educate United States military officers and civilians from agencies of our federal government. In light of recent events around the world, and the promise for more international cooperation and understanding in the future, I thought it appropriate to reflect upon the unique contributions that the International Seapower Symposia, the Naval Command College, and the Naval Staff

College—all of which call the Naval War College “home”—make to that arena. It is cause for great encouragement to see that such programs, supported by thousands of dedicated individuals and attended by naval officers throughout the globe in search of an elusive thing called “peace,” seem to be working.


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